

Report for Resolution

Report to Executive
8 July 2009

Report of Head of Planning and Regeneration

Subject A New Planning Framework for the University of East Anglia

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Purpose

To update members on developing a development strategy for the University of East Anglia that is co-ordinated with the masterplan for the Norwich Research Park. The report seeks Members' endorsement to the proposed approach.

Recommendations

1. That members agree not to proceed with a Joint Area Action Plan for the Norwich Research Park with South Norfolk Council, and that this be taken into account by the council in due course when it agrees revisions to the local development scheme for Norwich;
2. That members endorse the approach proposed by the University of East Anglia for a development strategy that will inform the local development framework for Norwich;
3. That Executive agree to the process to create strategic development principles for UEA and Executive nominates the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability City Development to be the city council's member representative on the project steering group;
4. That a further report be presented to Executive about the overall work programme, approach to public engagement, before proceeding with subsequent stages of the development framework;
5. That Executive give authority to the Director – Regeneration and Development to negotiate and agree detailed procedural and work programming arrangements for this development strategy, within the scope of the principles outlined in this report.

Financial Consequences

An Area Action Plan would typically take significantly more officer time and require more expenditure than assisting with the preparation of a development strategy informing Development Plan Documents and potentially being ultimately adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Therefore what is being proposed represents a saving compared to the work outlined in the current Local Development Scheme, although the scope of this saving is difficult to quantify and is unlikely to be "cashable".

There would still be a commitment of staff time as the city council's contribution to the development strategy project.

Risk Assessment

There are a number of potential risks associated with the proposed approach. The proposed approach is closely linked to key stages of plan-making as part of the local development framework, although there could be a perception that a parallel process for UEA is circumventing opportunities for the public to engage in the development plan process. This can be minimised by ensuring substantial opportunities for public participation in setting a development strategy. There is also a risk that in the preparation of the strategy being led by the UEA, proposals will emerge from it that are considered unacceptable to the City Council. This risk can be mitigated by City Council officers being in regular engagement with the university (and their consultants) and by conducting a rigorous sustainability appraisal of the emerging strategy. Although the council would wish to support UEA, the strategy itself would not be binding on the City Council in any case.

There is a slight risk that the approach proposed will not be acceptable to the Government Office and they will not endorse alterations to the Local Development Scheme. However, from information currently available it would appear that this risk is remote.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority “Strong and prosperous city – working to improve quality of life for residents, visitors and those who work in the city now and in the future” and the short term corporate priority and action to complete the joint core strategy and start its implementation.

Executive Member: Councillor Morrey - Sustainable City Development

Ward: University

Contact Officers

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Background Documents

Norwich City Council. Local development scheme, March 2007

Norwich Research Park, development brief. South Norfolk Council, adopted March 2009

Report

Background

1. Members may be aware that there are ongoing meetings between the City Council, South Norfolk Council and the University of East Anglia (UEA) to discuss future development at UEA and whether the current and proposed future planning framework provides an adequate basis for supporting appropriate and timely planning decisions being reached about development.
2. City Council Officers have agreed in these meeting to examine the issues surrounding establishing a rational planning policy framework to guide development at UEA, and in particular to consider whether the proposal in the current adopted Local Developments Scheme to produce a joint area action plan for UEA/NRP remains appropriate. This has to be done taking into account the relationship between UEA and the Norwich Research Park (NRP) and surrounding land. The Local Development Framework Working Party has been kept informed of this process.

Existing and emerging planning policy framework

3. The existing Planning Policy Framework for the Area is provided by the East of England Plan (May 2008), the saved policies in the City of Norwich Replacement Local Plan (November 2004) and the saved policies in the South Norfolk Local Plan (March 2003). In the case of the South Norfolk Local Plan it is supplemented by a development brief (adopted 23 March 2009) related to the areas covered by the NRP and contingency land allocations identified in the Local Plan.
4. The East of England Plan describes Norwich as a regional focus for housing, employment and other forms of development (policy NR1) and sets down challenging targets for the rate of housing and employment growth in the area. Policy NR1 advises that planning for employment growth should focus on five areas, one of these is the Colney/Cringleford area for “expansion of the research park reserved for research and development, higher education, and hospital/health related uses).
5. The work programme for future development plan production is set out in the Local Development Schemes for South Norfolk and the city council and both are updated annually through annual monitoring reports. Currently these both refer to a NRP/UEA joint Area Action Plan.
6. The joint core strategy (JCS) is also being prepared jointly (also including Broadland District Council) and the final public consultation (regulation 25) on the favoured option for development ended on 12 June 2009. The current timetable anticipates the strategy being adopted December 2010.
7. Notwithstanding the strong steer given about the importance of the NRP in regional policy the emerging JCS contains only limited reference to the NRP.
8. There has been no progress made by either council in relation to producing the joint area action plan. In South Norfolk the January 2009 update to the local

development scheme envisages work starting in late 2008 resulting in an adopted area action plan by August 2011. The update to the Norwich local development scheme contained in the December 2008 Annual Monitoring Report notes the workplan for the area action is to be determined (previously the June 2007 local development scheme envisaged commencement in August 2008 leading to adoption in July 2011. Even if both Local Authorities work together actively to progress the area action plan process means it is unlikely that adoption of this statutory development plan document will be possible much before the end of 2011.

9. Partners now require certainty about future planning policy for NRP in order to support investment plans and the job creation targets set down in the East of England Plan. Without a robust planning framework there is a concern that the lack of certainty may frustrate plans for investment and development. These concerns are shared by officers in other local authorities. An alternative way forward is proposed in this report.

Masterplanning activity for the Norwich Research Park

10. The Greater Norwich Development Partnership has formed a Norwich Research Park Development Group with a brief to drive forward the development of the NRP. This Group has produced a document on delivering the vision for NRP. This document describes NRP Masterplan Development as one of its workstreams.
11. There have been initial discussions with officers from South Norfolk Council and Norfolk County Council about the scope of this work. The early draft brief describes the following development vision for the NRP: "The NRP Campus will be an exemplar for an outstanding 'Next Generation' science park, integrated with the community to provide an excellent place to live and work as well as being an attractive and cost effective destination for inward investment.
12. Discussion regarding the range of plans required across the Norwich Research Park are still continuing. However, it is anticipated that there will be an overarching vision document with supporting detailed strategies for various areas of the NRP of which UEA will be one.
13. There are some difficulties in bringing forward a single Masterplan covering both UEA and NRP as the requirements of each part of the area are very different. With regard to UEA this is an already developed site which is constrained in terms of its future development and there is a need to examine growth needs within the context of existing development and the environmental constraints of the area. At NRP there is a large unimplemented allocation and the need for masterplanning activity comes from the need to establish the design principles for the development and making sure appropriate infrastructure is provided.
14. Initial discussions with officers from South Norfolk Council indicate support to amend the respective councils' local development schemes and not require the preparation of a joint area action plan. At an officer level there is also a consensus that the masterplanning needs of NRP are so different to those of UEA that a separate development strategy is justified, albeit one co-ordinated

with NRP by an overarching masterplanning exercise.

Proposed development strategy for UEA and possible revisions to the local development scheme

15. In the light of the above it appears appropriate to reconsider whether preparation of the joint area action plan for the NRP is still the best way forward. An alternative process is proposed for UEA, which could address the problems of a single masterplan for the whole area. This would involve the preparation of a development strategy for UEA, supported by Norwich City Council.
16. An effective development strategy would examine the medium to long term strategy for development of the university (perhaps looking towards 2050). In the light of demographic, educational and technological trends it should project possible student numbers, research role, and commercial activities at the university in the future and how will this fit within the context of the likely future communities of Norwich. This should be set within the context the RSS and the emerging joint core strategy policies about the importance of the development of the knowledge economy for job creation and regional competitiveness.
17. A staged approach is proposed, comprising the creation of a development strategy followed, if appropriate, by a detailed masterplan. The suggested process is set out below:
18. The Development Strategy is intended to:
 1. Explain the UEA aspirations for growth – the vision;
 2. Explain how growth will help achieve job, education and skills growth aspirations in greater Norwich;
 3. Test options to focus growth 'on campus' rather than dispersed growth 'off campus'
 4. Establish the strategic principle of how growth at the UEA will be accommodated;
 5. Establish the level of growth required to meet the UEA's aspirations;
 6. Identify the broad locations to be allocated for growth (after testing of site options); and
 7. Set a strategic framework for the preparation of a detailed masterplan.
19. The development strategy would be informed by the joint core strategy and would be part of the evidence base for the site allocations development plan document (a more detailed part of the local development framework).
20. The UEA masterplan would be prepared following the completion and endorsement of the UEA development strategy and it would lead to the preparation of a UEA Supplementary Planning Document.
21. The first stage in preparing the development strategy would be to establish

strategic development principles. To deliver this would involve:

- Detailed project brief, programme, establishing the steering group and project governance arrangements;
- Reference to UEA business plan and vision, the Conservation Development Strategy and the Landscape Strategy; the government's higher education policies and aspirations; East of England Plan; GNDP joint core strategy and the GNDP approach to NRP masterplanning;
- Collect baseline data on planning technical and environmental issues, including transportation and access, and how sustainable links could be provided to communities in western Norwich and to the remainder of NRP;
- Identify broad geographic extent of the study area for the framework;
- Investigation of strategic options to deliver growth (including off- and on-campus growth). The case for new infrastructure provision (and reasonable alternatives), in particular proposals for any "cross-valley link" will need to be considered;
- Undertake (strategic) sustainability appraisal of options;
- Prepare opportunities and constraints plan.
- Seek endorsement of the city council to the strategic development principles as part of the site allocations development plan document preparation.

22. The city council has expertise in carrying out sustainability appraisal for other parts of the local development framework and this would be a substantial contribution to help the university create its development framework and masterplan.

23. Subsequent stages to produce the strategy would be:

- Preparing the strategic land use requirements;
- Preparing a brief for the framework plan;
- Produce and test draft spatial site options for the framework plan;
- Produce detailed masterplan.

24. While members are recommended to support the development of strategic principles, clarification is needed about the a) timing of subsequent stages in relation to the demanding local development framework timetable; and b) the timing, scope and approach to public and stakeholder involvement. Clarification about these aspects will help to ensure the process is open, subject to full consultation and sustainability appraisal. Together, these will increase the weight that will be able to be attached to the development framework and detailed masterplan as material consideration in the planning process.

